

SENATE No. 810**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

Susan C. Fargo*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Susan C. Fargo	Third Middlesex
Byron Rushing	9th Suffolk
Martha M. Walz	8th Suffolk
Denise Provost	27th Middlesex
Ellen Story	3rd Hampshire
James B. Eldridge	Middlesex and Worcester
Marc R. Pacheco	First Plymouth and Bristol
Gloria L. Fox	7th Suffolk
Carl M. Sciortino, Jr.	34th Middlesex
Cleon H. Turner	1st Barnstable
John W. Scibak	2nd Hampshire
Pam Richardson	6th Middlesex
Benjamin Swan	11th Hampden
Elizabeth A. Malia	11th Suffolk
William Lantigua	16th Essex
Jay R. Kaufman	15th Middlesex
Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.	26th Middlesex
Steven J. D'Amico	4th Bristol
Tom Sannicandro	7th Middlesex

Kay Khan	11th Middlesex
Kenneth J. Donnelly	Fourth Middlesex
Willie Mae Allen	6th Suffolk
Richard J. Ross	9th Norfolk
Jennifer M. Callahan	18th Worcester
James J. O'Day	14th Worcester District
Frank I. Smizik	15th Norfolk
Mark C. Montigny	Second Bristol and Plymouth
Benjamin Swan	11th Hampden

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT TO ELIMINATE RACIAL AND ETHNIC HEALTH DISPARITIES IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority
of the same, as follows:*

SECTION 1. The General Court finds and declares that:

(a) disparities in health and health care are widespread in Massachusetts, and such inequalities
compromise the health and well being of racial and ethnic minorities, and impact all
Massachusetts residents;

(b) health disparities result from a range of social and economic factors that are not limited to
healthcare, but also include education and employment, neighborhoods and housing, bias,
discrimination and a variety of social determinants;

(c) addressing health disparities for racial and ethnic minorities is important to eliminating
disparities for other underserved populations including affected gender groups, sexual minorities,
geographically isolated communities and persons with disabilities; and

(d) an effective state strategy to eliminate disparities must be comprehensive and include
interventions that coordinate policies and efforts across state systems, agencies, and programs

SECTION 2. Section 16 of Chapter 6A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after the words “(7) the health facilities appeal board,” the following: –

(8) the office of health equity.

SECTION 3. The second sentence of the first paragraph of Section 16O of Chapter 6A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after the words, “The council shall make recommendations,” the following:- to the director of the office of health equity.

SECTION 4. The first sentence of the second paragraph of Section 16O of Chapter 6A of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking the figure “34” and inserting in place thereof the following:- 35, and by inserting after the words “secretary of health and human services,” the following:- the director of the office of health equity,.

SECTION 5. Chapter 6A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 16S the following section: –

SECTION 16T. There shall be an office of health equity within the executive office of health and human services. The office shall be in the charge of a director, who shall report directly to the secretary of health and human services. The health disparities council, described in section 16O, shall serve as an advisory board to the office of health equity.

SECTION 6. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after Chapter 111M the following chapter:–

CHAPTER 111N.

OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY.

Section 1. As used in this chapter, the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings: –

“Disparities” or “Racial and Ethnic Health and Health Care Disparities”, differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific racial and ethnic groups.

“Office”, the office of health equity, as created in section 16T of chapter 6A.

Section 2. The office shall coordinate all activities of the commonwealth to eliminate racial and ethnic health and health care disparities. The office shall set goals for the reduction of disparities, and prepare an annual plan for the commonwealth to eliminate disparities.

Section 3. The office shall collaborate with other state agencies of the commonwealth on disparities reduction initiatives to address the social factors that influence health inequality. These state agencies shall include, but are not limited to, the executive offices of health and human services, housing and economic development, public safety, energy and environmental affairs, transportation and public works, labor and workforce development, and education.

The Office shall facilitate between these agencies, communication and partnership to develop greater understanding of the intersections between agency activities and health outcomes. The Office will facilitate development of interagency initiatives to address the social and economic determinants of health and key health disparities issues such as but not limited to healthcare access and quality; housing availability and quality; transportation availability, location and cost; community policing and safe spaces; air, water. and land usage and quality; employment and workforce development; and education access and quality.

54 Section 4. The Office shall evaluate effectiveness of programs and interventions to
55 eliminate health disparities, identifying best practices and model programs for the state.

56 Section 5. The secretary of health and human services shall annually, on the day assigned
57 for submission of the budget to the general court pursuant to section 7H of chapter 29, designate
58 major initiatives of the Commonwealth affecting the health and health care of residents of the
59 Commonwealth. Such initiatives may include any activity of the Commonwealth, including, but
60 not limited to, activities of the executive offices of health and human services, housing and
61 economic development, public safety, energy and environment, transportation and public works,
62 labor and workforce development, and education.

63 For each such major initiative, the office shall prepare a disparities impact statement
64 evaluating the likely positive or negative impact of each initiative on eliminating or reducing
65 racial and ethnic health disparities. The statements shall, to the extent possible, include
66 quantifiable impacts and evaluation benchmarks. The statements shall be posted on the internet
67 site of the executive office of health and human services and submitted to the clerks of the house
68 and senate, members of the health disparities council, appropriate legislative committees, and the
69 house and senate committees on ways and means.

70 Section 6. The office shall prepare an annual health disparities report card. The report
71 card shall evaluate the progress of the commonwealth towards eliminating racial and ethnic
72 health disparities, using, where possible, quantifiable measures and comparative benchmarks.
73 The report card shall report on progress on a regional basis, based on regions designated by the
74 office. The office shall hold public hearings in several regions of the state to get public
75 information on the topics of the report card. The report card shall be delivered to the governor,

76 speaker of the house of representatives and president of the senate and the members of the health
77 disparities council, created under section 16O of Chapter 6A, before July 1 each year, and shall
78 be posted on an internet site of the office or executive office of health and human services.